

House Republican Press Release

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HOUSE APPROVES LEGISLATION TO PROTECT SPORTING OFFICIALS



BILL COSPONSORED BY REP. HARKINS

On Tuesday, April 11, the House of Representatives approved legislation cosponsored by State Rep. John Harkins, R-Stratford, that would help protect sports officials in Connecticut. House Bill 5786, An Act Concerning The Assault Of A Sports Official, now goes to the State Senate for consideration.

Under HB 5786, the state would establish a separate crime for assault of a sports official. This crime would be defined as causing physical injury to a sports official and/or intending to intimidate, harass, or retaliate against the sports official because of his or her officiating duties. The bill would make this crime a class D felony punishable by one to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both.

Sports officials that would be protected under the legislation include any person who officiates or enforces the rules at an amateur sporting or athletic event such as umpires, referees, judges, timekeepers and scorers. According the non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR), under current law, there are a number of different assault crimes with penalties ranging from a class A misdemeanor to a class B felony depending on the severity of the harm and the circumstances of the crime.

“In recent years, we continue to see more individuals who become out of control at sporting events,” said Rep. Harkins. “While these people embarrass themselves and seriously disrupt games, they can also cause serious injury to others. Sports officials should not have to face physical abuse or assault from an unruly fan and this bill sends a message that such behavior carries serious penalties.”

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) has publicly supported HB 5786. CIAC serves as the sole governing body for inter-scholastic athletic activities in Connecticut.